DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 464 076 SP 040 686

AUTHOR Dekker, Lisa M.; Krou, Caren A.; Wright, Timothy D.; Smith, Densie M.

TITLE Effective Strategies for Reducing the Overrepresentation of Minoroties in Special Education.

PUB DATE 2002-04-00

NOTE 28p.; Paper presented at the Annual Classroom Action Research Conference (2nd, South Bend, IN, April 27, 2002).

PUB TYPE Reports - Research (143) -- Speeches/Meeting Papers (150)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.

DESCRIPTORS Administrator Attitudes; Disabilities; Diversity (Student); Elementary Secondary Education; *Minority Group Children; Racial Discrimination; Rural Schools; *Special Education; Teacher Attitudes

IDENTIFIERS Indiana

ABSTRACT

This study examined whether the overrepresentation of minorities in special education was considered an issue in northwestern Indiana, noting strategies currently being implemented to address this issue in three counties and describing proven effective strategies for reducing minority referrals. Teachers, administrators, counselors, and school psychologists from rural schools with diverse student populations completed surveys that examined the perceived existence of the problem of overrepresentation of minorities in special education, identified strategies considered effective for accurate referral to special education, asked which strategies respondents currently used in their schools, and rated the effectiveness of the strategies. The eight strategies included educating the family about the disability, helping the family gain access to needed social services and supports, providing staff development on minority cultures and needs, and setting high expectations for all students. Results indicated that overrepresentation of minorities in special education was not considered an issue by respondents in northwestern Indiana. Most respondents said it was not a problem where they taught. They felt that all of the strategies were currently being used to some degree (except the strategy of providing staff on minority cultures and needs), and that the strategies were effective. (Contains 16 references.) (SM)

Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made
from the original document.

ED 464 076



Running head: OVERREPRESENTATION OF MINORITIES

PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE AND DISSEMINATE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

Denise Smith

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

1

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

- ☐ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.
- ☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.
- • Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

# Effective Strategies for Reducing the Overrepresentation of Minorities in Special Education

Lisa M. Dekker, Caren A. Krou, Timothy D. Wright & Denise M. Smith

Paper presented at the second annual classroom action research conference

April 27, 2002

South Bend, IN

040686

2

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

# Effective Strategies for Reducing the Overrepresentation of Minorities in Special Education

The disproportionate representation of minorities in special education is a well-documented, persistent, and unresolved problem (Skiba, Chung, Wu, Simmons, & St. John, 2000). Court cases dating back to the late 1960s reveal the use of discriminatory testing procedures which resulted in the overrepresentation of minorities in special education (Weinberg & Weinberg, 1989). Studies conducted by Kovach and Gordon (1997) found that low-income African American and Hispanic students are frequently placed in lower level classes even when they have equal or higher test scores. But test scores alone do not account for the vast numbers of minorities in special education. Parrish (2000) found that 45 out of 50 states had statistically significant over representation of black children in special education programs. Moreover, numerous states over identified Hispanic and American Indian students as well. Interestingly, while many of these students were placed in programs with the intent to help them catch up with their peers and re-enter general education classrooms, studies found that students in these programs actually receive inferior instruction and fall further behind students in regular classrooms (Kovach & Gordon, 1997).

Studies have found that test bias, lower teacher expectations, lack of communication with parents, ineffective teaching strategies, mandated teacher accountability, and lack of experience in multiculturalism all contribute to the overrepresentation of minorities in special education. (Cole, D'Alonzo, Gallegos, Giordano, & Stile, 1992; "Improving

Results," 2000, Kea & Utley, 1998, Parrish, 2000) While many efforts have been made to reduce the misplacement of minorities in special education, the trend of minority overrepresentation continues.

The federal government officially recognized this problem and attempted to correct it with provisions made in the 1997 reauthorization of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA 97). Lawmakers were disappointed to find that "more minority children continue to be served in special education than would be expected from the percentage of minority students in the general school population" (Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, 1997). IDEA has always required that all public agencies "establish, maintain, and implement procedures to assure that the tests and other evaluation materials" used for determination of eligibility for special education services are nondiscriminatory. It seeks to ensure that all students are given an accurate and non-biased assessment. Therefore, the suggested over-representation of minorities presents not only an ethical problem, but also a legal one. In an attempt to reduce the magnitude of this problem, new state reporting requirements concerning minority enrollment were implemented beginning with the 1998-1999 school year.

The state of Indiana, in accordance with IDEA 97, began collecting data on minority enrollment in special education during the 1998-1999 school year. They found that Indiana's overall enrollment level of minority students was not disproportionate, but that there was a significant overrepresentation of minorities in certain disability categories and educational placements (Skiba et al., 2000). These findings suggest the need for close examination of this issue and the implementation of effective strategies to reduce this problem.

Therefore, in keeping with the needs presented by our community, the purpose of our action research study was to determine if the over representation of minorities is viewed as an issue in northwestern Indiana, relate which strategies are currently being implemented to address this issue in three local counties, County A, County B, and County C, and recommend proven effective strategies for reducing the number of minority referrals.

## Literature Review

While the problem of the overrepresentation of minorities is not a disputed issue, the effectiveness of strategies for reducing the problem is still being researched and developed. Several strategies have been researched and recommended by experts in the field of education. Following is a summary of their research and recommendations for the effective reduction of minorities in special education.

According to the U. S. Department of Education (2000), concern about the disproportionate representation of minority students in special education persists despite 30 years of debate, litigation, and initiatives. The area with the most severe discrepancy continues to be students with leaning disabilities. In a study done by Coutinho, Oswald, and Best (2002), a higher percentage of African American students were identified as having a learning disability in 10 out of 15 cities surveyed. Additionally, studies show that minority students are 2.3 times more likely to be identified with a mild mental disability than a Caucasian student (Agbenyega & Jiggetts, 1999).

One of the most crucial strategies to implementing a successful approach for reducing the overrepresentation of minorities in special education is increasing family

involvement. This can be done through a variety of methods. Townsel (as cited in Warger & Burnette, 2000), director of a successful Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) funded program, expresses the need to educate the family about the child's disability. Parents who do not understand the disability may view the disability and the school system negatively. They will not feel a part of the educational process and therefore take less interest in their child's school career. Markowitz, Garcia, and Eichelberger (1997) suggest the use of parent workshops to increase awareness of the general education process and to help educate parents about specific programs and procedures that are part of the school setting.

Another important factor for increased parental involvement is providing the family with the supports needed so that they can help their children succeed. Townsel (as cited in Warger & Burnette, 2000) advocates gaining parental trust and support by going to the family and meeting them where they are comfortable, whenever possible. This helps the family feel at ease and takes away the feeling of inferiority that may surface when parents are invited to the school to meet with educational staff. Additionally, arranging for parent support groups and encouraging parents to work together can create added levels of comfort and understanding. As part of that support group, liaisons with community agencies should be established to help parents gain access to medical, social, and other support services that they may need to keep their family functioning at a healthy and productive level (Markowitz et al., 1997; Warger & Burnette, 2000).

Once the family has been educated about the disability and has the needed support systems in place, they are ready to become active participants in planning their child's education. Markowitz et al. (1997) advocates a school climate that promotes shared

responsibility for all students. The process of creating a child's educational plan involves a dynamic discussion where parents share in the problem-solving process and give direct input about their child's academic strengths and weaknesses. Schools can further encourage parents to take an active role in this process by providing personnel who are trained in the family's cultural background and are able to communicate with them in their own native language (Markowitz et al., 1997).

The second area that needs to be considered when attempting to reduce the number of minorities referred for special education is staff development. A study conducted in 1996 by Singh revealed that by the year 2025 almost 50% of school children in the United States will be children of color. At the same time, nearly 95% of all educators will be middle-class, white females. Frequently these educators have very limited, if any, experience with multicultural education. Kea and Utley (1998) propose that one of the most important strategies for reducing minority referrals, therefore, is for educators to become knowledgeable about "the underlying theories, approaches, and ideologies of the multicultural education process." Without this background and understanding, progress cannot be made toward racial equality in education. Multicultural educational theories, approaches, and ideologies can and should be taught at the pre-service level and as part of continuing staff development opportunities ("Improving Results," 2000; Kea & Utley, 1998; Valles, 1998; Warger & Burnette, 2000).

Teacher education is of the utmost importance since studies have found that all too often; minority students are given inferior instruction which is paired with low teacher expectations (Kea & Utley, 1998; Markowitz et al., 1997; Meier & Brown, 1994). This is often due to a lack of understanding on the part of educators. Students' cultural, social,

and/or linguistic characteristics may go unrecognized, be misunderstood, or simply be devalued (Kea & Utley, 1998). Once educators become familiar with various cultures and are able to distinguish between cultural norms and influencing factors such as poverty or environment, then realistic, high expectations can be set for all students.

Several teaching strategies are important for reducing the number of minorities who are referred for special education. In order for any student to be successful in the classroom, instruction needs to be meaningful. Meaning is developed through shared experiences, bridges to prior knowledge, and connections to real life. Students with disadvantaged home lives and various cultural backgrounds often do not have the same background knowledge or life experiences as those from middle-class, Caucasian homes. Therefore, teachers need to make every effort to build upon these children's experiences, drawing from their cultural heritage whenever possible. Lessons that incorporate the children's experiences are highly motivating and promote active learning (Warger & Burnette, 2000). They also give students the opportunity to build upon prior knowledge and advance to higher levels of thinking through more advanced instruction (Markowitz et al., 1997).

Another important teaching strategy for reducing the referral rates for minorities is building upon students' strengths ("Improving Results," 2000; Warger & Burnette, 2000). Students need to feel successful and know that they are capable of learning. By encouraging them to use abilities they already have we are teaching them to be self-confident and self-reliant. Teaching to students' strengths also encourages teachers to reach out beyond their routine methods of instruction to discover techniques that enhance the learning of all students.

A final recommended instructional strategy is the implementation of early childhood education for at-risk students. Although there are currently many early intervention programs in existence, there are very few that are designed to be culturally appropriate for minority students. To meet this need, Fowler and Lewman ( as cited by "Improving Results," 2000) have developed a program designed to provide appropriate multicultural preschool instruction. Their program, Skills Promoted through Arts, Reading, and Knowledge (SPARK), is a multisensory, multicultural, instructional curriculum that provides opportunities for the development of school readiness skills and appropriate developmental skills. Programs like SPARK give minority students the added boost they may need for academic success and provide support networks for parents that encourage their active participation and involvement.

## Method

### Description of Participants

For the purposes of gathering the necessary data for our action research project, surveys were sent to administrators, teachers, counselors, and school psychologists who work for public school corporations in Counties A, B, or C. A total of 910 surveys were distributed to 26 individual schools. Thirty-seven surveys were returned from six different schools. Of those responding to the survey, 29 participants were teachers, five were administrators, and three were school counselors. No school psychologists completed the survey. Years of experience in the field of education ranged from 1.5 years to 33 years, with an average of 14.5 years. All participants were Caucasian. Of the 26 schools who were sent surveys, all schools that choose to participate were composed primarily of rural populations. No urban schools choose to participate in our

study.

While geographically similar, Counties A, B, and C vary greatly in environment and population. All three counties are economically diverse and struggle with the issue of a transient population. This transient population is an urban problem in that students move from school to school, and a rural problem with seasonal migrant workers. County A is primarily composed of large urban school corporations that are highly transient and ethnically diverse. These schools tend to have a larger percentage of minorities than the rural schools in this county. County B is primarily composed of smaller, rural school corporations. The general student population is primarily Caucasian. County C is more evenly distributed between both urban and rural school corporations.

Materials

Our survey addressed the three main concerns surrounding the issue of overrepresentation of minorities in special education. It examined the perceived existence of the problem of overrepresentation of minorities in special education in northwestern Indiana by asking participants if they felt overrepresentation of minorities was in issue in their school. The survey also identified eight strategies considered to be effective for accurate referral for special education and asked participants which strategies were currently being implemented in their schools and how effective they felt these strategies were in addressing this issue (see Appendix A). Participants ranked the level effectiveness for each strategy using a Likert scale and answered in a yes/no format as to whether or not their school used each specific strategy. Information was also gathered on profession, ethnicity, and years of experience. The Likert scale was based on the following options: 1 strongly disagree, 2 disagree, 3 neutral, 4 agree, 5 strongly

agree.

Procedure

Data for our research was collected using a survey that was sent to administrators, teachers, counselors, and school psychologists. Using the Indiana Department of Education's 2000 School Directory, schools were selected which met the following criteria for inclusion in our study: school boundaries must be within in counties A, B, or C, elementary schools must contain only grades K-6, and high schools must contain only grades 9-12. All schools meeting these criteria were then listed alphabetically by county. The percentage of schools used in each county was determined by assessing the available percentage of schools in the smallest county. Based on these results, and using the random digits chart, schools were then randomly selected to receive our survey. Letters were hand delivered to the principals of selected schools seeking the administrator's approval and permission for their staff members to complete our survey during the week of February 4, 2002 (see Appendix B). Once approval was attainted, the school secretary distributed the surveys to all certified staff members included in the survey. Completed surveys were turned in to an envelope in the office and picked up by one of the researchers approximately two weeks later during the week of February 18, 2002. In order to keep track of data, all surveys were color coded by county and schools were individually coded using the random digits chart. As surveys were received, the information was coded and entered on a spreadsheet to facilitate further dissemination of the information. Information was broken down by county, profession, years of experience, and responses to the survey as a whole.

## Results

The purpose of this action research study was to show the degree to which overrepresentation of minorities is considered an issue in three northwestern Indiana counties, to determine which strategies are currently being implemented in these counties, and assess which educational strategies are considered most effective in reducing the number of minority referrals for special education.

Nine hundred and ten surveys were sent to a total of 26 schools. Six schools choose to participate in our study and collectively returned a total of 37surveys: four from County A, 15 from County B, and 18 from County C. Information was disseminated by the average per each individual question by county, profession, and years of experience.

According to our data collected on the first question of our survey, we can determine that overrepresentation of minorities is not viewed as an issue in Northwestern Indiana. Ninety-five percent of our participants felt that overrepresentation of minorities in special education was not a problem where they teach. Two and a half percent felt it was, and two and a half percent choose not to answer the question.

Using the information provided in Table 1 we observed that strategies one, two, three, five, seven, and eight received mostly agree and strongly agree responses and a few neutral responses. Strategy six has one participant who disagreed, and all other responses were neutral or in agreement. Strategy four contained the most diverse responses and the most responses that reflected disagreement to the statement.

According to the information on Figure 1, strategies three and five showed the most agreement, followed by strategy seven. Strategies eight, six, two, and one had virtually the same agreement. Strategy four stood out because it showed the least amount of

agreement.

The data was disseminated based on three criteria: county of origin, profession, and years of experience. The data was consistent with the overall average results as seen in Figure 1.

When examining the data by county, we found that the range of responses was fairly consistent between the counties. The Likert scale averages for each county had a variance of .17 to .67 for each individual question as can be seen on Figure 2. The greatest discrepancy was seen in strategy six with County B showing the most agreement and County A demonstrating least agreement.

Results from analyzing the data by profession (see Figure 3) demonstrate a strong agreement among the teachers, administrators, and counselors for most strategies. It was noted that strategy four showed a 1.27 discrepancy between administrators and counselors. In strategy eight the administrators showed a significantly stronger agreement than the other two participant groups. Furthermore, in strategy one, the counselors showed significantly stronger agreement than the other two participant groups.

Figure 4 illustrates the results broken down by years of experience. Participants were separated into five categories. Strategy four again shows the greatest discrepancy between groups of participants. Zero to five years of experience shows the least agreement with strategy four while the other groups remained more neutral or in agreement.

Table 2 shows responses to the yes/no portion of the survey. This section indicates the participants' beliefs regarding programs that address the strategies mentioned in the

survey that are currently being used by their local school corporations to address the issue of minority overrepresentation. The data indicates that the participants feel that all of the strategies are currently being used to some degree. Strategy four was the exception with the majority of respondents indicating that this strategy was not being addressed in their school.

## Interpretations and Implications

The purpose of this action research study was to show the degree to which overrepresentation of minorities is considered an issue in three northwestern Indiana counties, to determine which strategies are currently being implemented in these counties, and assess which educational strategies are considered most effective in reducing the number of minority referrals for special education. By means of a survey, we determined that overrepresentation of minorities in special education is not perceived to be a problem in northwestern Indiana and that several of the recommended strategies are currently being implemented and are considered to be effective. While we feel confident in the overall results of our survey, the data regarding which strategies were currently being used was limited due to the fact that several participants did not respond to this section of the survey. Additionally, although the collected data shows that participants do not feel that overrepresentation is a problem in northern Indiana, the surveys collected do not represent a true sample of schools in the area. This is due to the fact that all randomly selected urban schools choose not to participate, as did a rural school with a .2% minority population. Furthermore, out of the schools that did choose to participate, only a small portion of the surveys was returned. Our literature study suggested that overrepresentation is a problem, particularly in urban settings. Therefore,

generalizing our findings needs to be done with caution and our results should not be applied to a broader setting due to the narrowness of our sampling. Where our survey is valid for our sampling, it is not a true cross section of the schools in northwestern Indiana. Another possible interpretation why our participants did not see overrepresentation as an issue may be the fact that the recommended strategies are already being implemented in their schools and these strategies are demonstrating their effectiveness.

In accordance with our literature study, participants felt that all of the suggested strategies were highly effective as demonstrated in the overall average rankings which fell in the agree to strongly agree categories. Strategy four, while not as popular, was not considered negatively, but rather, neutral overall. This may be due to the fact that strategy four requires staff development and considerable time commitments outside of the regular school schedule. Several comments were received regarding the importance of strategy eight and the fact that it is a vital component to combating overrepresentation. Financial concerns regarding lack of funds for such programs were listed as common barriers to effective implementation of this strategy.

When analyzing the data by profession, we noticed that administrators were in agreement with all the suggested strategies, but that they felt most strongly in favor of programs that addressed early intervention for At-Risk students. Additionally, we observed that the administrators seemed to favor strategies that addressed the issue through programming and instructional approaches. Counselors, on the other hand, seemed to favor strategies that were student and family centered such as strategies one, three, and seven. This may be due to the fact that counselors are trained to work closely

with students and their families to help ensure a successful school experience. Teachers felt that strategies three and five were the most effective for addressing the issue of overrepresentation. They may have felt this way because these are areas that directly affect them and their level of success in working with any student. As stated in our literature review, family involvement is important for the success of all students. Moreover, setting the level of expectations for students is an area that teachers feel they have personal control over.

Teachers' years of experience directly influenced how strongly they felt about the suggested strategies. Although most strategies showed relative agreement, strategy four had a 1.38 discrepancy. Teachers with zero to five years experience generally felt that strategy four was less effective than teachers with more experience. We felt this may be due to the fact that less experienced teachers often feel that they are knowledgeable about current issues due to the fact that they have usually just graduated from school. Teachers with more experience often see the benefits of further training and desire to keep current on the issues. Less experienced teachers may also feel overwhelmed by the responsibilities of a new job and may be uninterested in strategies that require additional time and training.

## Summary

In conclusion, overrepresentation of minorities is not perceived as an issue in northwestern Indiana according to the participants of our survey. However, the literature suggests that it is. This discrepancy may be due to the limited number of responses we received. Whereas our results are valid for our participants and those in similar settings, they should not be generalized to other more diverse populations.

Our participants responded that the strategies recommended by the literature are being implemented in their schools. We were encouraged by these findings and plan to further these positive results by sharing these strategies with others.

References

Agbenyega, S. & Jiggetts, J. (1999). Minority children and their overrepresentation in special education. Education, 119 (4), 619-633.

Cole, J., D'Alonzo, B., Gallegos, A., Giordano, G., & Stile, S. (1992). Test biases that hamper learners with disabilities. Diagnostique, 17 (3), 209-224.

Coutinho, M., Oswald, D., & Best, A. (2002). The influence of sociodemographics and gender on the disproportionate identification of minority students as having learning disabilities. Remedial and Special Education, 23 (1), 49-60.

ERIC/OSEP Special Project on Interagency Information Dissemination. (2000). Improving results for culturally and linguistically diverse students (Report No. ED-99-CO-0026). Reston, VA: ERIC Clearninghouse on Disabilities and Gifted Education. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 445 449)

Kea, C., & Utley, C. (1998). To teach me is to know me. Journal of Special Education, 21 (1), 44-48.

Kovach, J. & Gordon, D. (1997). Inclusive education: A modern day civil-rights struggle. The Educational Forum, 61, 247-257.

Individuals with Disabilities Education Act of 1997, Pub. L. No. 105-17

Markowitz, J., Garcia, S. B., & Eichelberger, J. (1997). Addressing the disproportionate representation of students from racial and ethnic minority groups in special education: A resource document (Report No. ). Alexandria, VA: National Association of State Directors of Special Education. (ERIC Document Reproduction Services No. ED 406 810)

Meier, T. & Brown, C. (1994). The color of inclusion. Journal of Emotional and Behavioral Problems, 3 (3), 15-18.

Parrish, T. (2000, November). Disparities in the identification, funding, and provision of special education. Paper presented at The Conference on Minority Issues in Special Education in Public Schools.

Singh, N. (1996). Cultural diversity in the 21st century: Beyond e pluribus the unum. Journal of Child and Family Studies, 5 (2), 121-136.

Skiba, R. Chung, C., Wu, T., Simmons, A., & St. John, E. (2000). Minority overrepresentation in indiana's special education programs: A status report. Indiana University, Indiana Education Policy Center.

Special Education Rules, Indiana Administrative Code at 511 IAC 7-17 thorugh 7-31. (2000).

Valles, Eugene. (1998, Spring). The disproportionate representation of minority students in special education: Responding to the problem. Journal of Special Education, 32, (1), 52-54.

Warger, C. & Burnette, J. (2000). Five strategies for reducing the overrepresentation of culturally and linguistically diverse students in special education (Report No. EDOECOO5). Arlington, VA: ERIC Clearninghouse on Disabilities and Gifted Education. (ERIC Document Reporduction Service No. ED 447 627)

Weinberg, C. & Weinberg, L. (1989). Equal opportunity for bilingual handicapped students: A legal historical perspective. NABE Journal, 14 (1-3), 17-40.

Table 1

Tally of Likert Responses to Survey Questions

| | Question | s.d. | disagree | neutral | agree | s.a. |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. | Educate the family about the disability | 0 | 0 | 0 | 16 | 19 |
| 2. | Help the family gain access to needed social services and supports | 0 | 0 | 5 | 12 | 20 |
| 3. | Invite parents to be active participants in the child's education. | 0 | 0 | 0 | 5 | 32 |
| 4. | Staff development focusing on minority cultures and needs | 2 | 3 | 13 | 10 | 7 |
| 5. | Set high expectations for all students | 0 | 0 | 0 | 5 | 32 |
| 6. | Instructional approaches focusing on students' prior knowledge and experiences | 0 | 1 | 3 | 10 | 22 |
| 7. | Instructional approaches that build on students' strengths | 0 | 0 | 1 | 13 | 23 |
| 8. | Implement early intervention programs focusing on At-Risk students | 0 | 0 | 2 | 9 | 24 |

Note. s.d. = strongly disagree; s.a. = strongly agree

Table 2

Strategies Currently Being Implemented by Local School Corporations

| | Question | Yes | No | NR |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. | Educate the family about the disability | 16 | 0 | 21 |
| 2. | Help the family gain access to needed social services and supports | 16 | 0 | 21 |
| 3. | Invite parents to be active participants in the child's education | 17 | 1 | 19 |
| 4. | Staff development focusing on minority cultures and needs | 6 | 12 | 19 |
| 5. | Set high expectations for all students | 15 | 3 | 19 |
| 6. | Instructional apporaches focusing on students' prior knowledge and experiences | 15 | 3 | 19 |
| 7. | Instructional approaches that build on students' strengths | 16 | 0 | 21 |
| 8. | Implement early intervention programs focusing on At-Risk students | 12 | 5 | 20 |

Note. NR = no response

Figure 1. Overall Average Ranking of Strategies

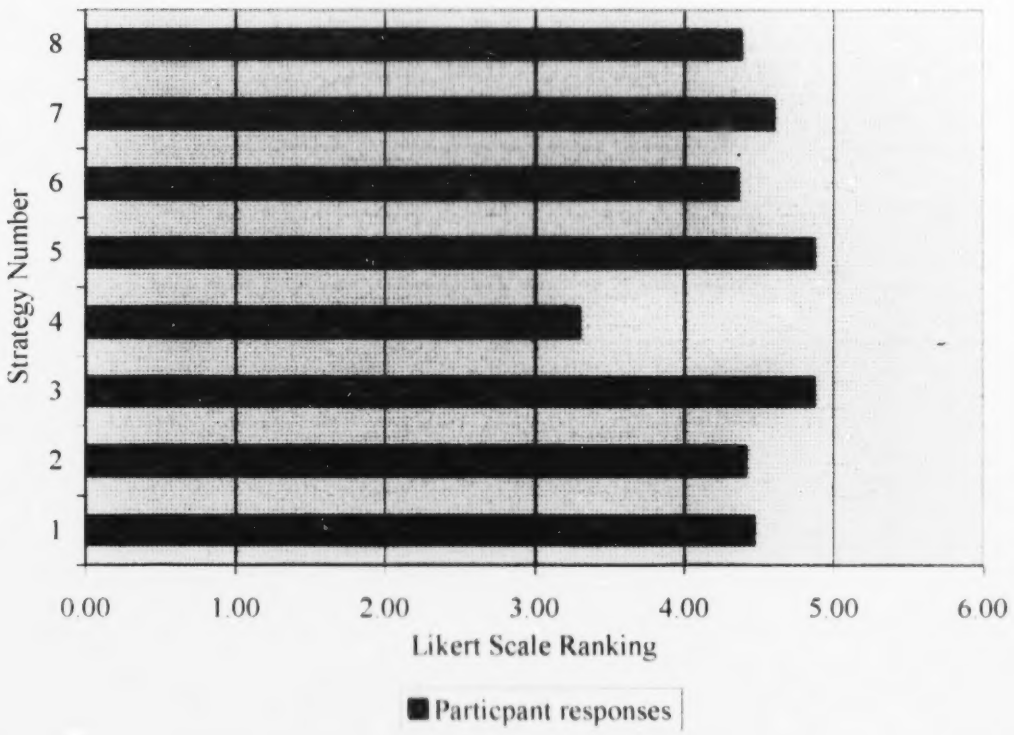


Figure 2 Average Ranking of Strategies by County

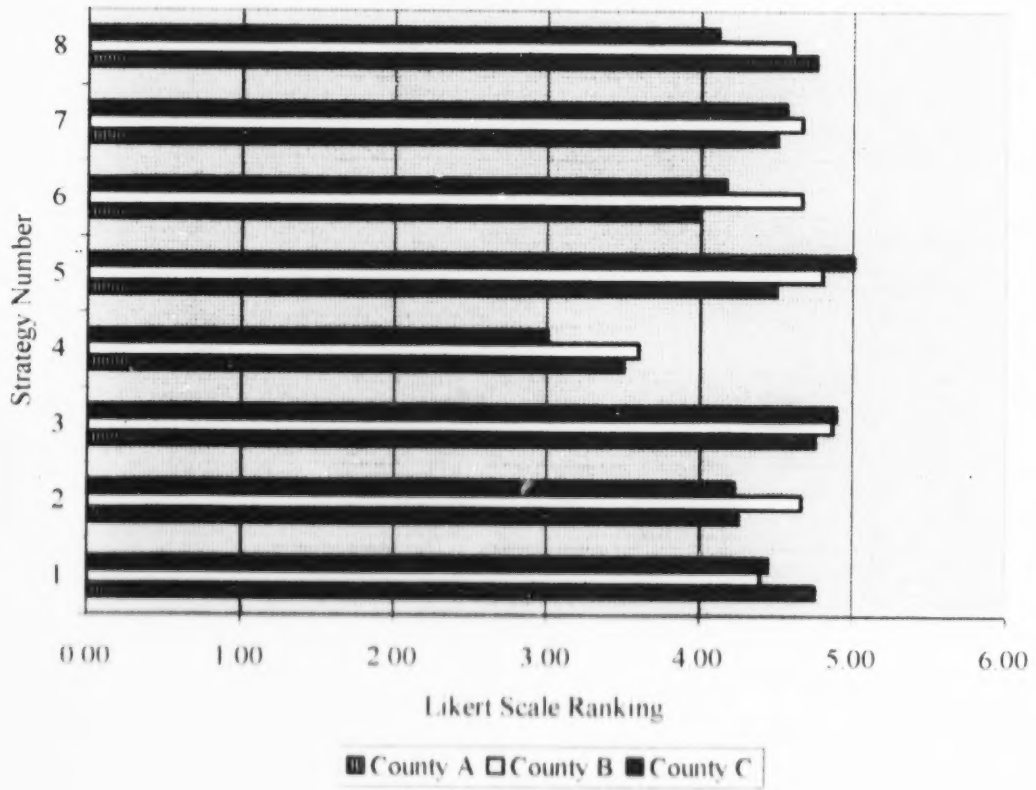


Figure 3. Average Ranking of Strategies by Profession

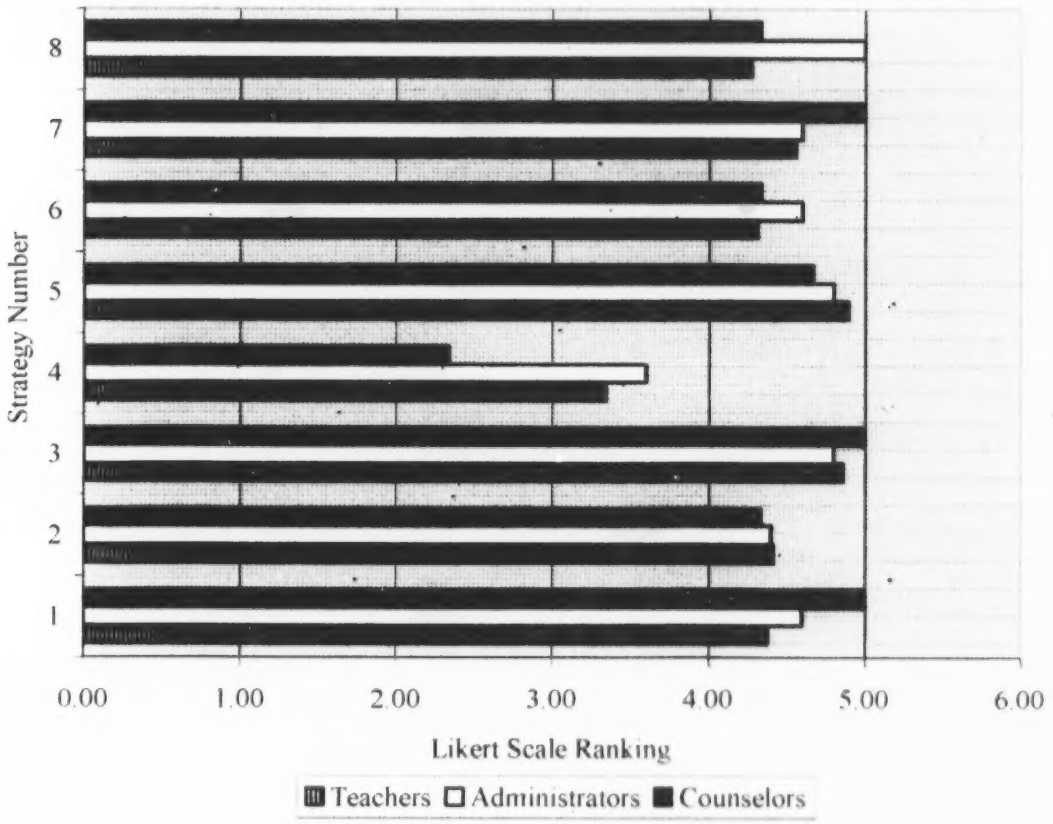
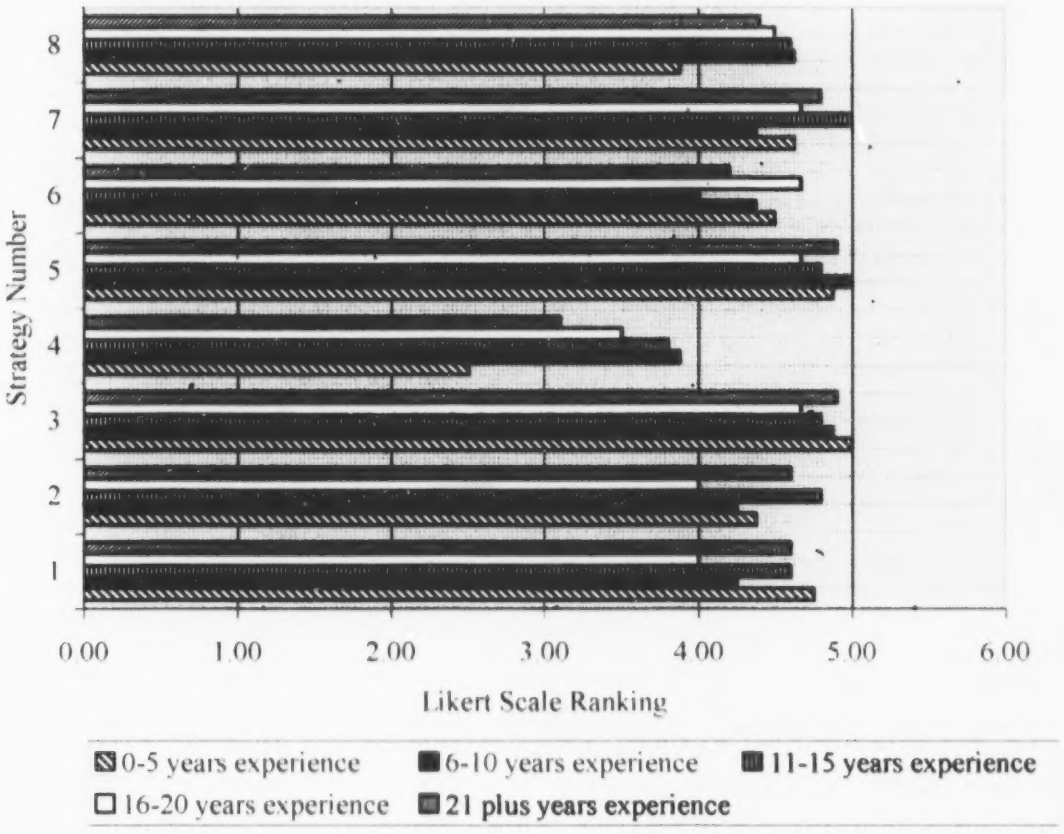


Figure 4 Average Ranking of Strategies by Years of Experience



Appendix A

**A Survey of Minority Representation in Special Education and Strategies to Prevent Overrepresentation**

**Demographics:**

1. Check one: Teacher___ Administrator___ Counselor___ Psychologist___

2. Years of experience or contact with Special Education programs _____

3. Ethnicity: African American_____ Caucasian___ Hispanic_____
   Asian American____ Other_____

**Survey:**

Do you agree that there is an overrepresentation of minorities who are referred for special education?
Yes____ No_____

Using the following 1-5 scale, please indicate by circling the most correct response, the degree to which you agree with the statement, "The following strategies are the most helpful for giving accurate referral for special education."

| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| strongly disagree | disagree | neutral | agree | strongly agree |

Then indicate the strategies currently used at your school

1. Educate the family about the disability 1 2 3 4 5 Yes\No
2. Help the family gain access to needed social services and supports 1 2 3 4 5 Yes\No
3. Invite parents to be active participants in the child's education 1 2 3 4 5 Yes\No
4. Staff development focusing on minority cultures and needs 1 2 3 4 5 Yes\No
5. Set high expectations for all students 1 2 3 4 5 Yes\No
6. Instructional approaches focusing on student's prior knowledge and experiences 1 2 3 4 5 Yes\No
7. Instructional approaches that build on student's strengths 1 2 3 4 5 Yes\No
8. Implement early intervention programs focusing on "At Risk" students 1 2 3 4 5 Yes\No

If there are other effective strategies that we have not included, please list them below

Appendix B

February, 2002

«Principal»
«School_Name»
«Street_and_Name»
«City_State_Zip»

Dear «principal_short»,

As a concerned professional, you undoubtedly are aware of the issue surrounding the overrepresentation of minorities in special education. We, as you colleagues, are interested in knowing how you and your school corporation are addressing this issue. Your school's responses to this survey will help us attain the information needed to compile a list of proven effective strategies for reduction of minority referrals for special education.

We are conducting this action research study to explore strategies used to reduce the number of referral rates of minority students for the special education program. Our purpose is to find the most effective strategies, which help reduce the number of minority student referrals.

Your school's participation in this action research study is, of course, voluntary. Confidentiality and anonymity are assured. Return of the surveys is consent for your responses to be complied with the others. Although the survey is coded, your staff and school will not be individually identified by your questionnaires or responses. Please understand that the use of this data will be limited to this research, as authorized by Indian University at South Bend, although results may ultimately be presented in formats other than the action research project, such as journal articles or conference presentations. You also have the right to express any concerns to our professor, Dr. Denise Smith at Indiana University at South Bend (219-237-4215).

We greatly appreciate your participation in this action research study. The survey will take approximately five minutes to complete. We request that a survey with attached cover letter be distributed to all certified staff members. Once the surveys have been completed, we ask that your secretary place them in the marked envelope. We will pick the surveys during the week of February 18-22, 2002.

Thank you for your interest and participation in this study. We genuinely appreciate your time.

Sincerely,

Lisa Dekker, Karen Crou, and Tim Wright

**U.S. Department of Education**
*Office of Educational Research and Improvement (OERI)*
*National Library of Education (NLE)*
*Educational Resources Information Center (ERIC)*

ERIC

# REPRODUCTION RELEASE

(Specific Document)

## I. DOCUMENT IDENTIFICATION:

| | |
|---|---|
| Title: Overrepresentation of Minorities | |
| Author(s): DeKker, Krou, Wright & Smith | |
| Corporate Source: | Publication Date: April 27, 2002 |

## II. REPRODUCTION RELEASE:

In order to disseminate as widely as possible timely and significant materials of interest to the educational community, documents announced in the monthly abstract journal of the ERIC system, *Resources in Education* (RIE), are usually made available to users in microfiche, reproduced paper copy, and electronic media, and sold through the ERIC Document Reproduction Service (EDRS). Credit is given to the source of each document, and, if reproduction release is granted, one of the following notices is affixed to the document.

If permission is granted to reproduce and disseminate the identified document, please CHECK ONE of the following three options and sign at the bottom of the page.

The sample sticker shown below will be affixed to all Level 1 documents

PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE AND DISSEMINATE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

Sample

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

1

Level 1

☒

Check here for Level 1 release, permitting reproduction and dissemination in microfiche or other ERIC archival media (e.g., electronic) and paper copy.

The sample sticker shown below will be affixed to all Level 2A documents

PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE AND DISSEMINATE THIS MATERIAL IN MICROFICHE, AND IN ELECTRONIC MEDIA FOR ERIC COLLECTION SUBSCRIBERS ONLY, HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

Sample

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

2A

Level 2A

☐

Check here for Level 2A release, permitting reproduction and dissemination in microfiche and in electronic media for ERIC archival collection subscribers only

The sample sticker shown below will be affixed to all Level 2B documents

PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE AND DISSEMINATE THIS MATERIAL IN MICROFICHE ONLY HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

Sample

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

2B

Level 2B

☐

Check here for Level 2B release, permitting reproduction and dissemination in microfiche only

Documents will be processed as indicated provided reproduction quality permits.
If permission to reproduce is granted, but no box is checked, documents will be processed at Level 1.

*I hereby grant to the Educational Resources Information Center (ERIC) nonexclusive permission to reproduce and disseminate this document as indicated above. Reproduction from the ERIC microfiche or electronic media by persons other than ERIC employees and its system contractors requires permission from the copyright holder. Exception is made for non-profit reproduction by libraries and other service agencies to satisfy information needs of educators in response to discrete inquiries.*

**Sign here, → please**

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Signature: Denise Smith | Printed Name/Position/Title: Denise Smith, Assistant Professor | |
| Organization/Address: IUSB Ave, POBox 7111 1700 Mishawaka South Bend, IN 46634-7111 | Telephone: 574-237-4215 | FAX: 574-237-4550 |
| | E-Mail Address: demsmith@iusb.edu | Date: 4/23/02 |

(over)

## III. DOCUMENT AVAILABILITY INFORMATION (FROM NON-ERIC SOURCE):

If permission to reproduce is not granted to ERIC, *or*, if you wish ERIC to cite the availability of the document from another source, please provide the following information regarding the availability of the document. (ERIC will not announce a document unless it is publicly available, and a dependable source can be specified. Contributors should also be aware that ERIC selection criteria are significantly more stringent for documents that cannot be made available through EDRS.)

| |
|---|
| Publisher/Distnbutor: |
| Address: |
| Price: |

## IV. REFERRAL OF ERIC TO COPYRIGHT/REPRODUCTION RIGHTS HOLDER:

If the nght to grant this reproduction release is held by someone other than the addressee, please provide the appropriate name and address:

| |
|---|
| Name: |
| Address: |

## V. WHERE TO SEND THIS FORM:

Send this form to the following ERIC Clearinghouse:

ERIC Clearinghouse on Teaching
and Teacher Education
1307 New York Ave., NW
Suite 300
Washington, DC 20005-4701

However, if solicited by the ERIC Facility, or if making an unsolicited contribution to ERIC, return this form (and the document being contributed) to:

**ERIC Processing and Reference Facility**
**4483-A Forbes Boulevard**
**Lanham, Maryland 20706**

**Telephone: 301-552-4200**
**Toll Free: 800-799-3742**
**FAX: 301-552-4700**
**e-mail: ericfac@inet.ed.gov**
**WWW: http://ericfac.piccard.csc.com**

EFF-088 (Rev. 2/2000)